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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
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3 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

Soul Survivors
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STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND...

Someone at the Project Blue government facility made a mistake. And now, the deadly flu-like virus "Captain Trips" has killed off 99% of the country's population.

The surviving 1% are tasked with living in a world they no longer understand—and making sense of the evil, faceless man that stalks them in their nightmares.

Among them is Fran Goldsmith, who is keeping a very big secret from her traveling companions—the misfit Harold Lauder; the quiet, handsome Stu Redman; and the world-weary Glen Bateman.

She's pregnant, about to start showing.

And that's not her only secret. She's also begun to having feelings for Stu...

What that means for her—and Stu—and Harold, the third point of this love triangle, in love with Frannie—no one can say...



FROM FRAN GOLDSMITH'S DIARY.
JULY 8TH.

It's late, but I should try to get as much of what happened down before my eyelids just SLAM SHUT.

We went into the CDC in Stovington today. Me, Harold, and Mr. Bateman, while Stu waited outside. It was spooky, let me tell you. Like a haunted house.

I don't think we'd better say anything to Stu about this room...

Wh-why?

Because I believe he came very close to dying here...

Once Harold's curiosity was satisfied, we went back out, and I wanted to just HUG and KISS Stu.

I felt ashamed, diary. That we hadn't believed Stu about the plague center and that we'd all complained about what an awful time we'd had when Captain Trips happened and he'd barely said anything.

That's when I realized...I was falling in love with Stu. I had the world's most CRUSHABLE CRUSH on him, and if it wasn't for Harold I'd take my damn chances...

Anyway, that was when Stu told us he wanted to go to Nebraska.

He wanted to chuck on this old lady he'd been dreaming about lately, he said.

Her name's Mother Abigail, I think, and she lives in a place called Holland Home or Hometown or something like that. In a field of corn.

While Harold made his sign, we had a very sober talk about our dreams.

Dreams we'd each been having, in some shape or other. About this woman. And about a bogeyman with no face.

It's remarkable...

...but we all seem to be sharing an authentic psychic experience.

Once we'd settled on a plan to find Mother Abigail (I'd take her over the dark side anytime), Harold suggested we stock up on Veronal and start taking small doses.

To disrupt these dream-cycles.

To stop the nightmares from coming.

I plan to palm my dose because I don't know what they might do to the Lone Ranger inside me.

Besides, bad as the dark man is, I like seeing Mother Abigail in my dreams. She so exudes an aura of NICENESS and KINDNESS.

I understand why Stu wants to go to her. I keep thinking if we can just get to her, everything will be A-OK.

Things to Remember, diary: The who, Kool-Aid, Converse All-stars, Night of the Living Dead, Brexer! That last one hits too close to home. I quit for the night!

Oh Lord, dear diary, the worst has happened. Let me tell you everything, even though it's no great treat to write it down.

Glenn and Stu went into town (Girard, Ohio, in case you're keeping track) to look for food, and Harold and I stayed behind to set up camp and boil some water.

We were talking about this and that, and I was thinking that Harold must've washed up at the stream when he went to get the water, when--

Harold!

I was so surprised, I fell right off the log. And Harold found it necessary to say:

Are you all right, baby?

And then it all came out. The bad dreams, the worrying about the baby, my feelings for Stu, the traveling, the stiffness, everything...

...and I started GIGGLING.

Followed by hysterical laughter.

What's so funny?

I giggled and laughed and sobbed until Harold must've thought I'd gone absolutely bonkers.



Now I have a temper I can't always control--a gift from my mother--and I could feel it starting to strain its leash.

Just like giving you a new pair of shoes, huh?

No one OWNS me, Harold.

I've met guys like him before, Frannie.

He's the quarterback who throws spitballs at you when you're reading your composition aloud 'cause it's the best in the class. The guy who goes steady with the cheerleader and thinks he's number one with a bullet.

Yeah... good luck with that.

Then he just walked off, and it was like he'd had some secret dream and I'd just shot it full of holes.

Honest to gosh, I felt terrible for him, diary, because he wasn't playing hurt, he WAS hurt. And whipped.

But what Harold has to see is that his head has got to CHANGE first. He's GOT to see the world is going to stay the same as long as HE does.

Anyway, I'm sure Harold's gonna be watching stu and me to see what happens next.

Oh, it makes me sick and pointlessly angry to write that.

What right does he have to watch us? What right to complicate this miserable situation we're in?

Things to Remember: The Texas Rangers had a pitcher named Nolan Ryan. There were TV comedies with laugh-tracks. you used to be able to get frozen cakes at supermarkets. Sara Lee were my favorites.

July 30th.

Oh, diary. It all happened so fast and was so horrible, but let me see if I can write it down in some kind of sense.

Our caravan was heading towards Indiana, when we swept around a curve and came face to face with a blockade.

I quickly counted twelve people: four men and eight women.



I stopped so suddenly, I almost skidded out.

You all right, Frannie?



Dismount.

All of you.

Whoever he was, diary, he made me time-travel inside my head to when that state trooper pulled me over for speeding.

I wondered if he was gonna ask to see our drivers' licenses next.



Dismount, dammit. Now.

That's when I thought: "We're sitting ducks."

And it struck me how odd it was:



What happened next took seven seconds.



One:

Glen was stunned, not moving. Harold was pulling on his guns, forgetting they were in their holsters. Stu's rifle was in his hands suddenly. Mine, too.

Two:

The bearded man, who had been aiming at stu, turned around and shot (and missed) the blonde woman.



(I screamed stu's name anyway, diary.)

Three:

Stu was on the ground, up on both elbows, firing.



Four:



Five:

One of the other men shot one of the other women point-blank in the face.



I closed my eyes, but I swear I actually heard her blood raining down on the pavement like from a storm.

Six:

The olive-skinned man shot at me.



Seven:

Harold fired at the olive-skinned man.



both shots missed.

I was trying to fire my gun, to kill the olive man before he killed Stu. (Stu?) or Harold or me, but it wouldn't fire.



That's when
Stu got him.



it was like Bonnie
and Clyde, diary.
There was blood
EVERYWHERE!



Meanwhile, the blonde woman
(who were these peoples?)
was struggling with one of
the men for his rifle--



Glenn sat in the
road, as if he
didn't know where
he was or what
was going on,
exactly.



CHAOS.



--while three of her companions
fought for possession of
the third man's shotgun.



INSANITY.



Once the second man got his rifle back, I thought he would shoot the blonde woman. Instead, he wheeled on the three women huddled against the country squire.

Yaaa! Pie,
you &*(!%\$#!
Yaahh! Die!!

One woman went
down the other
two ran.

Stu fired at
the shooter
and missed--

Come
on!

--even as the second
man gunned down one
of the running women.

Harold and Stu fired at the
shooter at the same time.

both hit their target.

*The third man--the only
man still alive--staggered
from the carnage...*

*...the woman in the Kent
State sweatshirt hot on
his heels, wailing on him.*

KERRUNCHH!

Then there was silence.

*Then the fluttering
of a bird taking
flight.*

*Then the Kent State woman
let out a long, primal scream...*

*...that I know will
haunt me for the
rest of my life.*

We were all in shock after it happened.

The NINE of us, now.

The blonde woman was Dayna Jurgens, from Xenia, Ohio.

The girl in the Kent State sweatshirt was Susan Stern.

The one who had squeezed Shortgun's crotch was Patty Kroger.

The eldest woman was Shirley Hammet.

No one knew the last woman's name! No one had ever heard her talk.

Glenn was holding my hand, muttering:

You mustn't let it affect you. Such horrors...bound to occur. Best protection is in numbers. Society, you know. Society is the key...

Yes, Glenn.

The grass was still wet from the previous night's rain.

White butterflies, sluggish because their wings were heavy with moisture, circled around us...

Around the 28th of July, they all started dreaming about a boogymen. A "hardcase" who was getting an army of "hardcases together" so he could enslave all the other survivors.

*(And let me tell you:
That chilled me, diary.)*



In Williamstown, they came across an overturned dump truck in the highway.

That's where Danya and her companions had been ambushed by the four "hardcases." They executed Richard and Daman and took Danya prisoner.



I was the fourth addition to their "harem," they called it.

Or sometimes "zoo."



The hardcases had been in the army, apparently. They were moving across the country, killing any men they met and capturing the women so they could rape them over and over.



Doc, the leader, was very taken with you, Fran. I could tell.

The men kept the women sedated on pills. Uppers in the morning, downers at night.

The last couple of days, though, they'd been palming the pills, which is why they'd been able to fight back this morning.





JULY 31ST.

where to begin, diary?

Harold and Glenn had gone into Brighton to find a CB radio. Payna and the women were back at camp, and I was looking for Stu, who had gone off by himself.

Hello?

I found him, smoking a cigar that made me think of my father's pipe.

Frannie, want to share my rock and watch the sun go down?

Oh, boy, did I ever.

That old woman, she's not in Nebraska anymore. She's in--

Colorado, I know--

--I said, before I remembered it was supposed to be a big secret that I wasn't taking my verbal.

...

You're not the only one. I talked to Payna, and she and Susan aren't taking it, either. And I'm not.

We were all feeling...out of touch.







For the--
You're pregnant?

And no one but you knows, not even Harold!

I thought he would either leave immediately (like Jess would've, if he'd found out I was pregnant with another man's child) or he would hug me.



But all he did was LOOK at me, diary, for a long time.

And I couldn't help it, I kept thinking of Paddy and when I told him in the garden.

When are you due?

January--

--I said, the tears coming.



And he didn't say that I shouldn't worry or that he would take care of everything, but he made me feel that way, diary, by the way he held me and made love to me again.

And I knew Stu and I were TOGETHER now, and that the others would find out soon--about us, about the baby--but right now, it was our secret.



And that until we got to Mother Abigail and the others, Harold CAN'T SUSPECT A THING. (sounds like a line from an old Bette Davis movie, doesn't it?)

More later--I need my rest tonight, no matter what dreams may come.

**LATER.
PAST MIDNIGHT.**

Frannie slept heavily and dreamlessly that night.

So did they all, in fact--



--except for
Harold Lauder.

Who looked down at Frannie
and thought: We're in the
dog days of summer now...

Every dog
has his day.

He took Fran's journal back
to his sleeping bag and read
everything.

*It's late, but I should try to
get as much down before my
eyelids just SLAM SHUT...*

He felt like the little boy he'd
been, with few friends and many
enemies. The boy who had turned
to books--to reading--for
solace.



He read everything about
Frannie and her love for Stu.

He read and remembered his
fantasies about all the pretty
girls at Ogunquit High. How they
would please him and he would
chastise them with small
leather whips.

Frannie had been
one of those girls.

Every doggy
has his day...



In the hour before dawn, he
replaced the diary in Frannie's
pack. He wasn't careful about
it, thinking if she woke, he
would kill her and then run.

But not to
Colorado or
Nebraska...



...to the desert.

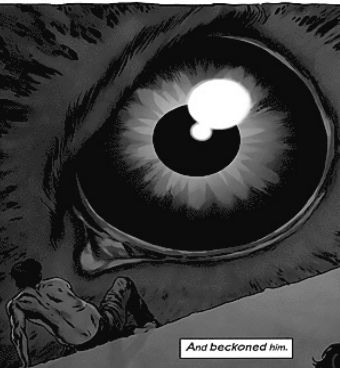
Harold crawled into
his sleeping bag, and
when sleep came, it
was thin.



He dreamed he was dying, somewhere in the desert.



High above him, cruising buzzards rode the night thermals, eager to make a meal of him.



Then a frightful, vulpine red eye opened in the dark and looked at him.

And beckoned him.

To the west, where shadows were even now gathering, in their twilight dance of death...



THE NEXT DAY.

Harold smiled
all day long.



He smiled even though they didn't make
it across Indiana as quickly as they hoped,
hitting a horrible clog of army vehicles
near the Elkhart interchange.



He smiled as they gathered as
much firepower as they could
carry from the dead soldiers.
Two dozen rifles, some grenades,
and yes, even a rocket launcher.



He smiled as he and Stu
struggled to figure out
the rocket launcher, for
which there were, count 'em,
seventeen rockets.



He smiled so much that when
the group started bunking
down for the night, Frannie
remarked:

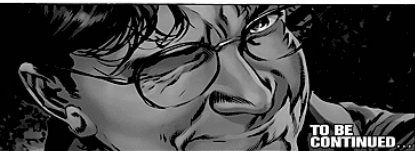
You know, Harold,
I don't think I've ever
seen you feeling so
good. What is it?



He winked at her and
said something puzzling.

Every dog
has his day,
Fran...

That night, Harold began
keeping his own journal.



TO BE
CONTINUED

STEPHEN KING **THE STAND**

SOUL
SURVIVORS
ISSUE
3

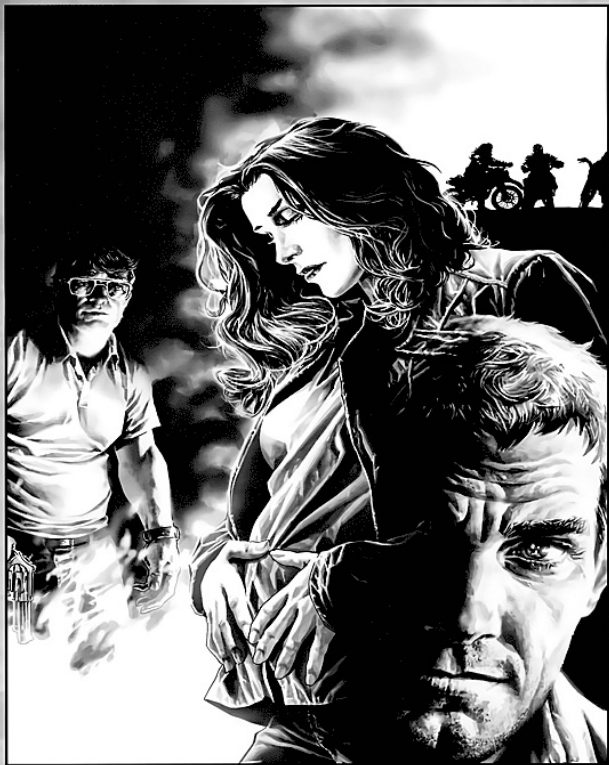


SKETCHBOOK

Cover concepts by Lee Bermejo and Mike Perkins.



Lee Bermejo's black and white art for this issue's cover.



Mike Perkins' black and white art for this issue's variant cover



SCRIPT TO FINAL

PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

A close-up or medium-shot of Fran, in her sleeping bag, writing in a spiral notebook. A flashlight by her side is illuminating the page. (Or maybe she's holding it?) In the background, Stu, Harold, and Glen Bateman are asleep, all of them arranged around an extinguished campfire. (NOTE: We're going to be cutting to some version of this "journaling" scene a few times, Mike, since it's the convention of the issue.) NOTE TO LETTERER: Can we do something with the captions in this issue to reflect it's Fran's handwriting they're reading?

FLOATING TEXT: FROM FRAN GOLDSMITH'S DIARY.

CAPTION: JULY 8TH.

CAPTION: It's late, but I should try to get as much of what happened down before my eyelids just SLAM SHUT.

PANEL TWO.

Take us inside the CDC—into the room where Stu was being held captive. And where he killed his captor and would-be murderer. From the ground-level, we're looking up at Fran, who is covering her mouth in mid-gasp (on the left-hand side of the panel); Glenn, in the middle, a stony expression on his face; and Harold, on the right, who looks queasy and sick. They are all looking down at something.

CAPTION: We went into the CDC in Stovington today. Me, Harold, and Mr. Bateman, while Stu waited outside. It was spooky, let me tell you. Like a haunted house.

GLENN: I don't think we'd better say anything to Stu about this room...

(CONTINUED)

PAGE ONE (CONTINUED).

PANEL THREE.

Now we're behind our threesome and we're looking at what they're looking at, which is: The broken corpse of the man Stu killed, face down in a pool of his dried blood. The smashed chair (Stu wielded) off to the corpse's side.

GLENN: ...I believe Mr. Redman came very close to dying in this room.

PANEL FOUR.

Cut to Exterior, CDC. In the foreground, on the left-hand side of the panel, we have: Stu, sitting on a low stone wall, with his back to the building 'cause he can't even look at it. In the middle of the panel, in the middle- or background, we have Frannie, and then Glenn, and then Harold, walking towards Stu through a field that is overgrown. Frannie is moving with some urgency towards Stu, her heart going out towards him.

CAPTION: Once Harold's curiosity was satisfied, we went back out, and... I wanted to just HUG and KISS Stu.

CAPTION: I felt ashamed, diary. That we hadn't believed Stu about the plague center and that we'd all complained about what an awful time we'd had when Captain Tripe happened and he'd barely said anything.

PANEL FIVE.

Continuous. A close-up on Frannie's face/head, filling the panel. Her eyes wet with emotion.

CAPTION: That's when I realized... I was falling in love with Stu. I had the world's most CRUSHABLE CRUSH on him, and if it wasn't for Harold I'd take my damn chances...



PAGE TWO.

PANEL ONE.

Cut to our foursome sitting or standing around Stu (on that wall), variously. Listening to him as he talks.

CAPTION: Anyway, that was when Stu told us he wanted to go to Nebraska.

CAPTION: He wanted to check on this old lady he'd been dreaming about lately, he said.

STU: Her name's Mother Abigail, and she lives in a place called Holland Home or Hometown or something like that. In a field of corn.

PANEL TWO.

Cut to: The chain-link fence that encircles the CDC. Harold is sitting cross-legged on the ground, painting a sign that leans against the fence. (That's on the left-hand side of the panel.) To his right, we have: Glenn, Frannie, and Stu, standing in a clump. Glenn has one of his hands hooked into the fence.

CAPTION: While Harold made his sign, we had a very sober talk about Stu's dreams. About this woman. About the bogeyman.

CAPTION: Dreams we'd each been having, in some shape or other.

GLENN: It's remarkable...

GLENN: ...but we all seem to be sharing an authentic psychic experience.

PANEL THREE.

A few beats later. The sign Harold was making in the previous panel is now hanging on that chain-link fence. (And of course it's the same sign Larry and Nadine stumbled across last issue, Mike.) The foursome are walking away from it, towards their mopeds (which we don't have to see). From left to right we have: Glenn, Harold, Stu, and then Frannie.

CAPTION: Once we'd settled on a plan to find Mother Abigail (I'd take her over the dark man anytime), Harold suggested we stock up on Veronal and start taking small doses.

HAROLD: To disrupt these dream-cycle.

HAROLD: And stop the nightmares from coming.

(CONTINUED)

PAGE TWO (CONTINUED).

PANEL FOUR.

Back to a version of Page One, Panel One. Fran is in her sleeping bag, but she has finished journaling and is putting her diary away, into her knapsack (which is where she keeps it, we're establishing). In the background, everyone still sleeping.

CAPTION: I agreed to that plan but am gonna palm my dose because I don't know what it might do to the Lone Ranger inside me.

CAPTION: Besides, bad as the dark man is, I like seeing Mother Abigail in my dreams. She so exudes an aura of NICENESS and KINDNESS.

PANEL FIVE.

A few moments later. Staying on Fran, who has now put away her notebook, flashlight, and stuff, and has rolled over on to her side, trying to get to sleep.

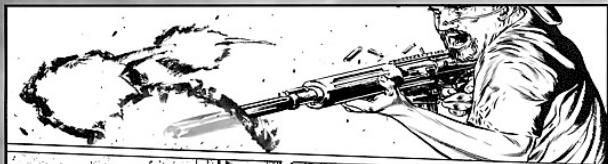
CAPTION: I understand why Stu wants to go to her. I keep thinking if we can just get to her, everything will be A-OK.

CAPTION: Things to Remember, diary: The Who. Kool-Aid. Converse All-Stars. *Night of the Living Dead*. *Errrrr!* That last one hits too close to home. I quit for the night!



Mike Perkins' detail and sense of the macabre is on full display in the black and white art for this gruesome sequence that hearkens back to his 2000 AD origins. The final colored art by Laura Martin was seen earlier this issue.







Next: *I'm Abigail Freemantle Trotts, I play and sing well; I do not know these things because anyone told me...*



"If you've got a fever for riveting graphic fiction based on the biggest pop novelist of all time, the prescription is more Captain Trips."

--Rachel Molino, WIZARD MAGAZINE



The end is nigh as a deadly plague sweeps the nation and widespread panic overcomes the dying masses of America in a terrifying and inexorable tide. Who will be left to rebuild on the ruins of their past lives as the ancient rivalry of Good vs. Evil has only just begun?

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale which begins at the end of the world.

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